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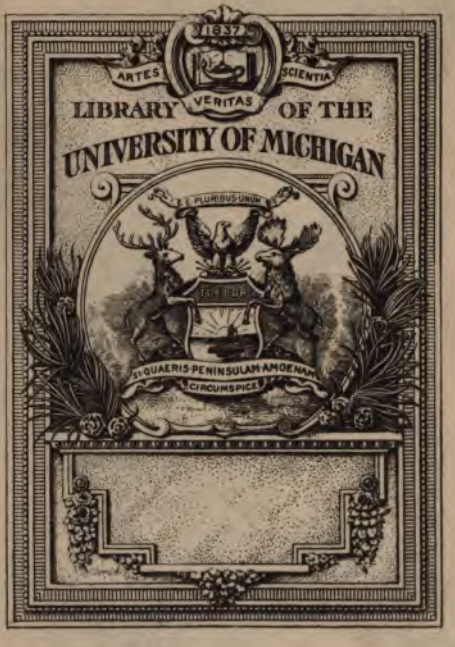
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HARD TIMES;

The Causes which Produce Them; The Lessons they Teach; The Spirit in which to Bear Them; How to Make Them Good; When will they Come no More?

BY

REV. JOS. S. VAN DYKE,

OF

CRANBURY, NEW JERSEY.

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HARD TIMES.

THE CAUSES WHICH PRODUCE THEM.

"They have done nothing of all that thou commandest them to do; therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them."—Jeremiah xxxii., 23.

If you should ever deliberately leap over Niagara, do not complain of what comes after. The nation which violates divine commands, ought not to murmur under divine judgments.

Capitalists loaning money at four per cent.! Farmers selling grain at less than the cost of production! Embarrassed manufacturers throwing calico on the market at three cents a yard! Mechanics without work, laborers without bread, widows sewing sixteen hours a day and receiving in return scarcely enough to maintain an enfeebled existence! What do these things mean? Hard Times, God's laws disregarded.

It requires no especial searching to discover persons now in penury who a few years ago were in affluence; no remarkable penetration to perceive that many have been financially ruined; that of even the prudent many are greatly embarrassed, economical people being without money and Christian men asking for an extension of credit. Bank buildings, farms, manufacturing establishments, private residences—humble cottages and palatial mansions—"Going, going, gone," at less than one-half the former estimated value. Sheriffs so crowded with business as to become intoxicated with success—

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or with something less honorable. Worse still, a pack of hungry wolves, who, after ravenously devouring wrecked fortunes, are lean, lank and hungry still, prowling about for more prey.

What's the explanation? Hard Times, divine commands violated and groaning thousands bearing the penalties. It certainly cannot be denied that it is extremely sad to see those penniless who were once rich; those deeming themselves fortunate in having a humble shelter from the pelting storm, who once dwelt in lordly mansions; the improvident almost on the verge of starvation; tramps on nearly every highway; and still more heartrending to observe that even the industrious and economical are in distressingly straitened circumstances; all classes, in greater or less measure, feeling the tightening grip of pecuniary embarrassment. Why this stringency? From nearly all comes back the response, "Hard Times; we have been disregarding immutable laws of Heaven."

None of us, however, desire to be understood as affirming that our Heavenly Father has withheld, or even diminished, the gifts of His bounty. The harvests have been abundant. There is enough for all, even for the wandering tramp, the desolate widow and the homeless orphan. Nor do we mean to affirm that our industries have been unproductive. Of manufactured articles our markets are full. Nor have the hidden treasures of the earth failed. Coal, iron, lead, silver and gold have been produced in large quantities. In the midst of unparalleled plenty how shall we explain the present excessive depression? The transparent fact that God has not stinted us renders it evident that the stringency is due to our own conduct. We have brought these evils upon ourselves. How? this is the question we shall endeavor to answer. We shall endeavor to convince you that we are simply suffering the consequences of our own acts; are merely eating the fruit of our own doings.

Manifestly, we should be guilty of no slight sin if we

imagined that God was the author of the evils we have brought upon ourselves. This would be an attempt to defend ourselves by slandering our Maker. Hushed forever be the thought that God is punishing us in any other way than by permitting us to punish ourselves! If we have deliberately violated those laws upon whose observance continued prosperity depends, let us not be guilty of the stupendous folly, nay, the atrocious sin, of charging our multiplied troubles upon the dealings of a benevolent God. To some, perhaps, it may seem quite pious to affirm, "God is visiting judgments upon us;" to most, however, it is more in accordance with genuine religion to acknowledge that we have erred, and are suffering the penalties.

Few, perhaps, may be disposed to affirm, as Jeremiah did of the Jews, that this nation has done "nothing of all that God commanded it to do;" nearly all, however, are ready to confess that we have violated divine injunctions. Some, no doubt, are reluctant to acknowledge that our embarrassments are in punishment of sins; but none, assuredly can deny that if God has simply declined to interfere—merely permitting us to reap as we have sown—we have no right to murmur. Environed by the consequences of our own acts, it is wisdom to inquire, "Wherein have we sinned?" Since God, when he punishes us, needs not to mete out judgments arbitrarily, but has simply to let us alone—our own transgressions bringing down punishment with unerring certainty—it is only in this qualified sense that we are at liberty to attribute our calamities to his agency. He has linked disastrous consequences with the violation of his immutable laws; consequently, we inevitably suffer the merited punishment of persistent disregard of divine commandments. And what else are God's judgments, either upon individuals or upon nations, either in this life or the next, than simply non-interference? The sinner, left to the result of his folly, is eternally undone. A nation, permitted to reap as it has sown, is certain to gather a large harvest of misery.

What then are the causes, the effects of which we are now enduring? what the divine laws we have been violating and whose penalties we have been paying? Before attempting to enumerate the causes, or to ascertain their connection with transgressions of inviolable mandates, it may be well to assure ourselves that Hard Times are a natural result of wide-spread immorality. They are an effect; immoral practices the cause. To-day is settlement day. We have danced to the music, and we must pay the piper. Our sins have found us out. The declaration, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," is as true in reference to nations as to individuals. The scriptural assertion, "Godliness has promise of the life that now is," is as applicable to national life as to our own. It is true that, inasmuch as the cause must precede the effect, it often happens that the generation sinning the most suffers less than some subsequent age. The fact that we are the sufferers does not necessarily prove that we have sinned more heinously than those who lived in the prosperous times of fifteen years ago.

And yet have we not merited punishment? We who were born to see things as they should be, have schooled ourselves to see things as people say they are. We have rendered ourselves hoarse in shouting, "The things that are, are the things that shall be. Reform! Why, we Americans are the purest, most intelligent, most moral, most civilized people on earth. Go, reform the poor heathen. Teach them the advantages of that form of Christian civilization which talks piously and practices villanously. As for us, we are heaven's favored people."

Thus, by submitting to the existing order of things and tutoring conscience to believe them as near right as they can be in this sinful world, and as good as God demands, we increase the volume and strength of those causes which are shaking the pillars of our material prosperity, even of our national permanency. Crash, crash, crash, the structure is *tottering*. *Riches* have taken to themselves wings and are

flying away. Unless new foundations are laid, and the rotten timbers are replaced by sound ones, the nations of the earth will be invited ere long, perhaps before a century rolls round, to attend the funeral of the Great Republic. Who will preach the sermon? "Old Time." What will be the text? "Thus always with those who violate Heaven's laws." Who will sing the funeral dirges? The weeping Goddess of Liberty. Where will they bury her? In eternal oblivion. What shall inherit her possessions? Some form of government that tramples individual liberty beneath her iron heel.

But the causes of Hard Times? Some tell us the present financial stringency is the result of heavy expenditures during the war. Nor are we disposed to deny that in great measure this is true. Unquestionably, it happens with a nation as with a business house, after borrowing heavily and expending the money in ways whence no returns are possible, pay day is accompanied with excessive embarrassment. To a great extent the money expended in the war was a waste similar to that of squandering riches to feed vanity or personal ambition. Whatever may have been its return in honor, in the maintenance of national unity and in the perpetuation of free institutions, it yielded no dividends in the means of liquidating debts. So far as our national prosperity was concerned it was so much wealth consumed. And to imagine that those were in reality prosperous times in which borrowed money was circulating freely, is to forget that true prosperity, both private and public, is measured by the balance left after all obligations are paid. In point of fact the nation was poorer than it is to-day. It mortgaged itself and spent the borrowed money in cannon, shot, shell, shoddy, bad whiskey and the wastes of war. If, instead of paying our sacred obligations, we should permit ourselves to be dragged into the infatuation of re-issuing paper currency or circulating millions of depreciated dollars, we might again have financial intoxication, to be succeeded by *times* still harder, if not indeed by national and

almost universal bankruptcy. If fits of intoxication follow each other too rapidly they inevitably produce death. Successive paroxysms of borrowing are certain to end in financial ruin. Engraved paper, whether in the merchant's safe or in the public treasury, is no increase of wealth. It is simply a promise to pay, in hands that must return it with interest, or be financially bankrupt. And if hard cash is not earned to meet the obligations as they mature, embarrassment ensues.

At present we are not concerned to ask whether these expenditures were not augmented by dishonesty. We desire to lay stress upon the simple fact that borrowing is followed by a demand for payment; and that settlement day, with those who have not earned even interest, is necessarily a trying time. Perceiving this, you perceive that war, which always necessitates borrowing, must be succeeded by Hard Times. It is the penalty God exacts for blood. The war being a gigantic crime, we cannot escape its consequences, impoverishment and suffering.

The war was a sin in which every section of the country participated. Consequently, all suffer. Its immediate cause was sectional rebellion. And was not this one of the greatest crimes of the nineteenth century? Since escape from the penalties of transgression is impossible so long as omnipotent justice occupies the throne, we are certainly not so foolish as to suppose that our crime could pass unpunished. But what produced the rebellion? Party strife and the spirit of lawlessness. Why expect these to escape punishment?

Some ask, "Why do the innocent suffer with the guilty?" It is sufficient to answer, "God deals with nations as nations." Are any innocent, however? Where are the voters who are free from the trammels of party? where the persons who have not aided in electing men whose public and private life disqualified them for office? where the ballots that have never been cast under the promptings of party *spirit? Few indeed* are the people—their residences are

unknown—who, having banded together, dare to say, "We care nothing for party. Good men and good principles are conditions of receiving our votes. Give us these and you may have our ballots. Refuse; and neither a day's wages, political preferment, party success, fulsome flattery, nor even bad whiskey can purchase us. We will select our own men, announce our own platform, and die honorably, die solemnly protesting against exalting party above country." The guiltless are almost as rare as white blackbirds.

Examine the soil from which rebellion sprang, the spirit of lawlessness. With jurors pronouncing men innocent whom the evidence convicts; with petty thieves in state prison while those who stole thousands are dwelling in lordly mansions; with bar-rooms open on Sabbath, and violating law unblushingly; with men in legislatures who retail liquor without license; with knaves holding honorable and responsible offices and even occupying places at the communion table, are we prepared to affirm that we are guiltless of encouraging lawlessness?

As I do not covet a martyr's fate, nor the reputation of "taking arms against a sea of trouble," I pause. If you are not convinced that our calamities are penalties, in part, of war and of the transgressions which produced it, you are respectfully handed over to that ancient dame, Experience, who, it is said, keeps a dear school, though her instructions are valuable and moreover are seldom forgotten.

Others tell us reckless speculation has been the cause of the present depression. It can not be denied that some people seem to consider speculation the easiest and most direct avenue to wealth. The old way, through industry, economy and perseverance, is deemed too tedious and too rough. It is that along which the successful men of the present nearly all travelled; it is now denominated antiquated, however, and is accordingly contemned by the young aspirants after success. Possibly, if the hard times continue long enough, the old way

may become popular again. This seems quite probable since the new road is pretty badly blocked up with wrecked fortunes, ruined men, and tottering institutions, across which ghastly spectres are writing predictions of coming disaster. It may be the time is not far distant when the young shall perceive that one becomes wealthy, not so much by increasing his store, as by diminishing his wants; not so frequently by wild speculation as by honest industry. May we not ardently hope that there is a good time coming soon, when persevering industry and unflinching principle will no longer be at a discount while reckless speculation is trampling fortunes, hearts and lives into the bottomless gulf where so many have sunk to rise no more. Though there is unquestionably such a thing as legitimate speculation, there are instances in which the term is merely a respectable name for the worst forms of gambling, a thin varnish for revolting hideousness, a gilding to bare-faced rascalities.

These illegitimate speculations, which have aided in bringing on disaster, are evidently violations of divine laws. One divine injunction makes this manifest, "Owe no man anything but to love." The man who, with his own earnings, pays for all he purchases, may indeed become poor, but can never involve others in ruin. He may become rich by an advance in the market value of the article purchased, but is not likely to become so intoxicated by a sense of his own shrewdness as to stake his own fortune and all he can borrow on the chances of a rise or fall in some stock that has only a speculative value. Nor is he liable to become so completely blunted in moral sense as to deliberately plan how he may ruin others, thereby affording himself an opportunity of purchasing wrecked fortunes at half price.

Another divine injunction, as bearing upon speculation, deserves attention, "Labor not to be rich." If one may not "*labor* to be rich," certainly he should neither *rob* nor *gamble* to *become rich*. *This* unreasonable desire to acquire wealth, how

many has it ruined! It has betrayed friendships, burned out the conscience, shattered the health and hurled souls upon the hissing pavements of perdition. Strange that immortal beings should become so infatuated with love of glittering dust. Can it purchase pleasure? No. Can it buy health? No. Can it secure genuine friendship? No. Can it purchase a mansion in the eternal city? Not even a mud hovel. Can it bribe the angel of death? For his dull ear the chinking of gold has no charms. What can wealth do then that men so ardently covet its possession? It can purchase a silver-mounted coffin, and a handsome marble slab.

If this is substantially all it can do, why do men so labor to be rich? Is it because there are no nobler ends for which to toil? No nobler objects? There is the good of society, the progress of religion, the honor of one's family, the possession of a good name, the consolidation of moral character, the happiness of heaven. He who is bending all his energies to amass wealth is moving on a very low plain. Moreover, the Bible affirms, "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." This certainly is true, in a pre-eminent degree, as regards many forms of speculation. Consequently the prevalence of this spirit is an occasion for deep regret. As a nation we have had a violent speculative spasm and are suffering from the resulting weakness. We became so preternaturally excited as to have shattered our nervous system somewhat, and impaired our health to some extent; and to have lost our equilibrium and our money along with our good, strong, Anglo-Saxon common sense. Large doses of the bitter drug experience are beginning, however, to have a good effect. With our debts paid, a hundred cents to the dollar, we shall be strong once more. Probably it will be many long years before our people will so seriously violate Heaven's laws as to bring on a second paroxysm of reckless speculation. They will have a wholesome dread of the disastrous consequences.

Others assure us political corruption is the source of our

woes. They tell us—unfortunately it is but too true—that political corruption, especially in our large cities, is appalling. Politicians are buying votes and reimbursing themselves by robbing the long-suffering public. They are accepting bribes to favor legislation in the interest of wealthy individuals and powerful monopolies; not infrequently to the serious detriment of the mass of their constituents. Alike in city and county contracts have been given out for unnecessary improvements; given out that by fraudulent manipulations a corrupt ring might grow wealthy while impoverishing the burdened taxpayers. Consequently, in some instances, public debts have become so enormous that taxation, which sorely presses the people, fails in yielding a revenue adequate to pay the interest on the outstanding obligations, leaving nothing for the payment of current expenses. Dishonesty is showing its hideous features where unblemished Honor ought to have her sacred throne.

Indeed, if to legitimate national, state, county, city, township and private indebtedness there be added the indebtedness resulting from political fraud, the aggregate must be enormous. It is a burden under which the industrious and the honest are heavily groaning. To pay the debts honestly incurred is all we are well able to do, and all that ought to be imposed upon us. When, in addition to these, we are endeavoring to pay the heavy sums which political dishonesty is saddling upon us, is it any wonder we are forced to drink the cup of humiliation? Nor is there any honest way of escaping these sacred obligations, however great the fraud by which they were produced, since our indifference to the conduct of the men whom our ballots elected has permitted the burden to be legally imposed upon us. It is to be hoped, however, that ere we drink the dregs citizens will perceive the necessity of frowning down political jobbery, vote-buying, corrupt legislation and ring frauds.

The disheartening amount of private dishonesty that is now

coming to light is no doubt due, in great measure, to the prevalence of fraud in political circles. The former, according to scripture, is a natural result of the latter; "The wicked walk on every side when the vilest are exalted." Though we are far from asserting that all politicians, or even the majority, are corrupt, it cannot be denied that facts indicate that many are. Certainly some unprincipled men are raised to responsible positions, and, unfortunately, they are subsequently honored and flattered, often by persons claiming respectability. So long as these things are true, so long as we are paying a price for dishonesty, so long as a person may retain social standing, and be warmly welcomed into Christain homes, though guilty of dishonest practices, so long there will be no occasion for us to marvel that the wicked walk on every side. Unprincipled men are honored; result, wickedness increases. Knaves are accorded social equality with honest Christian people; consequence, dishonesty is rife. The man who at present has no social standing, if he should steal a hundred thousand dollars and be known to have done so, but could manage to escape the penalties of theft, would immediately be received into what we are pleased to consider good society. Christians would be courting his company, ministers would be flattering him, clerks and bank accountants would consider themselves honored by a nod of recognition from his daughters. He's wealthy; that's a cloak that hides a multitude of sins. Lawyers would grow eloquent over his many virtues; jurors would whitewash his questionable transactions; judges would learnedly descant on the insufficiency of the testimony, hired sycophants would make community ring with his many amiable qualities. If instead of stealing a hundred thousand dollars, however, he had stolen a few heads of cabbage, most probably he would have been consigned to prison walls, there to learn a few necessary moral lessons.

There is a sad lack of confidence, we are told. Lack of confidence! there must be some cause for this. He who has

the qualities which command respect will always be respected. He who is worthy of confidence will, as a rule, secure the confidence of his fellowmen. If lack of confidence has become general it can only be, we suppose, because there is no basis upon which general confidence can rest. With great pertinency we might ask, whether we are likely to lay the foundation of restored confidence by encouraging and rewarding dishonesty. If, as a people, we are schooling ourselves to that mock form of charity which, forgetting first principles and the honor due to honesty even though it may be in humble garb, does not hesitate to palliate the rascality of bank officials who rob confiding widows and dependent orphans; nay, which even associates on terms of equality with those who deliberately cheat a neighbor, or even rob an aged father or a widowed mother, we surely cannot expect a speedy restoration of confidence, nor an immediate return of prosperous times. We may be certain that so long as dishonesty neither incurs legal penalties nor acts as an effectual barrier against entrance to society, so long it will continue. Nor will it be proper, under these circumstances, for us to be denominating our calamities judgments of heaven, when they are so manifestly results of our own conduct. We reap as we sow.

Upon reflection I doubt not you will concede that the prevalence of dishonest practices has been caused, in great measure, by our neglect in inflicting adequate social and legal penalties upon knavery. Is there any valid reason why persons who would not steal a dinner should consider themselves honored in being invited to eat one purchased by stolen money? any reason why those who would not rob a carpet store should set their honest feet beneath the table and upon the carpet purchased by the proceeds of rascality? Not till we have ceased to reward and honor dishonesty can we expect it to hide its head in shame. Not till we have annihilated the causes which are producing hard times need we expect a return of prosperity. *In France, so complete* is the social ostracism of those who

have been guilty of deliberate rascality that they are seldom allowed again to enter respectable society; so galling is the disgrace of even innocent bankruptcy, that a son will often impoverish himself to pay the debts of his father, thereby giving him a passport to society again. It is no doubt owing, in great measure, to this high respect paid to honesty that France has been able to astonish the world by the ease with which she has paid immense sums to her conqueror.

Others tell us Hard Times are the result of extravagance. They assure us that large numbers of the American people are living beyond their means. If so, it is a great calamity. We have been told of gentlemen hastening from broker to broker, endeavoring, at a ruinous discount, to raise money to keep a note from going to protest, fearing that the consequent examination might reveal their financial rottenness. While anxiety is depicted in their features and perspiration is standing like beads upon their heated brows, the wife and daughters, at some fashionable store, are deciding upon the comparative merits of costly articles of jewelry, or are selecting the delicate shades of imported silks, or discussing the superior elegance of the latest novelty in furs.

Those who consider extravagance the cause of our troubles affirm that many, in order to live as those who have large incomes, are knowingly expending beyond their means, depending upon borrowing or upon a return of better times to repair their shattered fortunes. If relief is too long delayed they occasionally help themselves from employer's drawers. Style must be maintained; honestly if possible; at least, must be maintained.

Without doubt the failure to perceive that what is prudent expenditure for one man, and withal beneficial to society, may be excessive extravagance for another, has contributed in no slight measure to Hard Times.

Another cause, "The Liquor Traffic," a powerful cause, more potent than any one cause yet mentioned. You need

merely be reminded that, according to the reports of the internal revenue, the nation's liquor bill for the last three years equals the national debt. Evidently this immense waste has been by far the most efficient cause in producing Hard Times. A wilful waste; a woful want!

You have no doubt long known that Hard Times are due to violations of divine commands. Is it difficult then to perceive that personal transgressions are certain to incur divine punishment? The argument of this discourse, if it has any weight, has cogency in recommending an immediate examination into our personal relations to a God of immutable justice. If He visits nations with the consequences of their sins, so also does He visit individuals. If to the former He shouts "Repent, Repent," to the latter He says, "Flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel."

In determining to address you upon a subject so general, it has not been my purpose to divert attention from personal duties, nor to attract the eye from the cross. Nay, I sincerely entertain the hope that through this agency I may be enabled to quicken awakened souls to inquire after the way of redemption. If, as every nation's history proves, it is impossible to escape the penalty of violated law, why not seek immediate forgiveness of the past in a Saviour's love, and strength for the future in divine grace? It may be that national transgressions have been abundant and that private sins have been sadly numerous; this, however, far from inducing indifference to personal salvation, ought to induce instant action. May this sermon and those that follow it be blessed to the conversion of souls. Flee to the Saviour. Heaven's judgments have no terror for those who are sheltered beneath a Redeemer's love. A struggling Church needs your service; a dying world demands your effort; a rejected Saviour awaits your decision.

THE LESSONS THEY TEACH.

"*Teach me Thy judgments.*"—Ps. cxix., 108.

Hard Times! Yes, times are hard. The machinery of society is working badly. The balance-wheel is apparently gone; or, driven by wild fanaticism, is shattering things in general, and individual fortunes in particular. Cogs are broken, and consequently, by heavy thugs and great strains, the stupendous machine is breaking itself to pieces, and grinding some of its parts to powder. It is high time repairs are begun. Put the brakes on the immense driving-wheel, and examine carefully the condition of things. It is necessary, and the time is opportune. All are ready to lend aid in the much needed work.

Amid much that is excessively disheartening, there are encouraging aspects in the present condition of things. It is a remarkably favorable time to inculcate moral lessons. The minds of all are open, and even eager to receive the truth—probably more receptive than they have been for several generations. When people are upon their backs, they can only look one way—towards heaven. The condition they are in forces from them the exclamation, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth." Accordingly, moral and religious lessons which would have commanded no attention a few years since are now eagerly examined. We all perceive that evils exist. This is the first condition of remedying them. Ten or fifteen years ago even a John Knox could not have persuaded us that evils existed calling for redress. Now, even dullness itself perceives their prevalence and their fatal potency. God has been teaching us. When He speaks in His thundering providences, even sleepy auditors lend a listening ear. By hard experience

He has done what no human preacher could have done—has opened our hearts to receive and seriously weigh immutable laws and our relations to them. We now perceive, more clearly than it has been perceived for more than half a century, that cent for cent must we pay for all our transgressions of divine commandments. Adversity has its uses. In God's hand it is an instrumentality whereby he teaches great moral and religious truths. The Jews, carried as captives to Babylon, where they mournfully recalled their wanderings, and learned lessons which prosperity failed in teaching effectively; the Egyptians, mourning over the death of the first-born in every home, and acquiring new revelations of the sacred rights of humanity; the nations of Central Europe, after the Thirty Years' War, drinking humiliation's cup to the bitter dregs, and perceiving that the cause which God defends man cannot destroy; the English Catholics, when crushed to the dust and repressed by stringent legislation coming by slow degrees to acknowledge that God never delegated to a mortal—even though religious fanaticism pronounced him Heaven's vicegerent on earth—the right to dictate to the consciences of hundreds of thousands; these, and numberless other instances, make it apparent that our Maker employs adversity as the means of teaching moral truths.

In masses, human beings are very difficult to instruct, very dull of apprehension, very slow in accepting doctrines that are antagonistic to the existing order of things. Individuals may be swayed by reason; masses of men change their opinions and alter their practices only as driven by stern necessity. Consequently, the most valuable lessons nations receive are those which are imparted in the school of adversity. The richest blessings they enjoy come through the avenues of trouble. To no inconsiderable extent this is true of individuals. It was the severity of David's trials that enabled him to attain such pre-eminence in religious knowledge. It *was grief that tuned his* harp to those melodious strains which

have stirred emotion in the bosoms of so many millions. If he had not been the greatest sufferer of his age, he could not have become the sweet singer in Israel. Moses, whose entire life was one continuous conflict with troubles; Elijah, whose existence was embittered by the trials of the time and by the relentless persecution of Jezabel; Daniel, hated, maligned, conspired against and cast into the lions' den; Isaiah, misrepresented, buffetted, contemned, derided; Paul, oppressed by poverty, scourged from city to city, environed by perpetual perils, thrown into prison and beaten with stripes; Luther, slandered, persecuted, pronounced a monster, badgered, execrated by half Europe and his life rendered a continuous struggle with embittered enemies; John Knox, denounced by nearly half Scotland, and persecuted in ways unnumbered and innumerable; Wesley, hunted down by a set of unprincipled and unreasonable enemies; these, like nearly all those whose lives have proved a blessing to human society, learned priceless lessons in adversity, becoming thereby qualified for teachers of the race. Except for these trials, they, like others, might have been unknown.

If there had been no such thing as tribulation in the world, there would have been an extreme dearth of great men—few, indeed, would have been the blessings we could now enjoy. Religious liberty sprang from the ashes of the martyrs. Constitutional government was purchased by blood. The right of the masses to an education was wrenched by force from the grasp of tyrants. The free redemption now proclaimed by the gospel to all, was purchased at no less a price than the death of God's Son in human form. Nor can it be denied that nearly all of us receive our most priceless benefits from the hand of adversity. Job, when stripped of his wealth, bereft of his children and stricken with loathsome disease, might have imagined, "All these things are against me;" but no, "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning," giving him "twice as much as he had before."

How frequently, after we have stood weeping over the grave of wrecked hopes, have we discovered that what we deemed an unmixed evil has proved one of our richest blessings. What we supposed would result in injuring our fortune, in diminishing our happiness, and in breaking down our spirits, has unexpectedly enlarged our success, augmented our joys, and furnished a solid basis of continued cheerfulness.

I. The numerous and sudden changes from riches to poverty, which are so characteristic of Hard Times, teach us the instability of earthly possessions, and tend to increase our estimate of heaven's unfailing treasures. Stability in wealth! Manifestly there is no such thing.

> "The spider's most attenuated thread
> Is cord, is cable, to man's tender tie
> On earthly bliss; it breaks at every breeze."

In these intense times, when men suspend their all upon the success of a single venture, it is no uncommon thing to find men rich to-day and poor to-morrow. In the morning they count their hoarded gains by thousands. But it is "Black Friday" in Wall street, and ere evening their accumulations have melted away like snow beneath an April sun. With their all invested in margins, they confidently counted on a rise in stocks; lo! there has been a ruinous decline. Penniless, they retire to a sleepless couch, spending the night in excited ejaculations about "puts" and "calls" and "corners," and "bulls" and "bears." One thing is certain, they are effectually ruined, and now, at leisure, may reflect upon the insecurity of earthly possessions, and prepare moral essays upon the folly of reckless speculation and redhot anathemas against abounding rascality. They see it now. Failure has an almost magic power in opening blind eyes. Success blunts *the vision to knavery.* Had they succeeded, no sermon, even *an hour long, could* have convinced them that these methods *were dishonest.* They failed, however, and now they have

turned preachers of honesty and righteousness and honorable dealing. Their sudden conversion, if lasting, may prove exceedingly profitable to them and beneficial to society. Pity others could not secure conversion by the same means! We should have an additional reason for considering blessings concealed beneath the rough visage of Hard Times. Even in the country, where fortunes are made more slowly and lost less suddenly, it not seldom happens that a person purchases real estate, mortgaging himself for one-half the purchase price, and in a few years without any fault on his part finds himself bankrupt. Riches come and go, like the birds in spring, that settle now on this branch, now on that, and anon are off to distant climes, leaving all the trees songless. In the expressive language of Scripture, "they make themselves wings and fly away," leaving their possessor in darkness, despondency and poverty. Is there no lesson in this unstable character of riches? Do we not hear God's voice whispering in the soul, "Make not this fleeting world your portion!" That which is so evanescent in its nature cannot satisfy an immortal being. Secure enduring riches and righteousness.

So closely are we wedded to earthly possessions that their escape from our tightened grasp seems necessary to break their potent influence over us, and drive us nearer to God. We think little of the sun when its rays are bathing us in their gorgeous splendor. When clouds drape the heavens, and fierce storms are breaking upon our unprotected heads; when wounded, almost exhausted, we are ready to sink down by the roadside; when the roar of the angry elements seems like a funeral dirge beside the grave of our blasted hopes, then it is that we long for the cheering sun. It is after adversity that our thoughts are turned heavenward. If life were one continuous experience of pleasure; if prosperity, unshadowed by trouble, were our uninterrupted portion; if there were victories without defeats, and joys without sorrows, we should become so cemented to the world that we might feel, if not

affirm, "Let God give us a long life of unmixed pleasure, and we ask no interest in heaven." Indeed, so feeble would become the attractions of the celestial world that death would be almost certain to find us unprepared. The rasping cares of life, the sad reverses, the heart-burnings, the discouraging disappointments, the emptiness of the most substantial pleasures and the overwhelming losses that hurl us into the deepest abysses of despondency—these are the influences which render heaven dear—these the agencies by which we are brought to appreciate the unseen treasures of the world of glory. The adversities of earth, its trials and its corroding cares are what render that state where these are never permitted to enter peculiarly attractive to our satiated hearts.

II. Another lesson taught by Hard Times and the trials they entail is that true nobility of character is developed by adversity. Greatness is the gift of hardships. Prosperity tends to effeminacy. Strength is the result of endurance. True piety comes forth from the furnace of affliction. Manliness of character is produced on tribulation's threshing floor. Not the "pampered sons of affluence," but they who have battled with life's "stern realities," who have wrenched success from the frowning front of adverse circumstances, are the men who acquire strength, solidity, influence and power of benefiting society. Ardently as we all covet uninterrupted prosperity, God could, in fact, send us no heavier curse. It would render us indolent, arrogant, grossly wicked, enervated in mind, body, conscience and soul.

We all concede that it is a mistaken kindness in parents to gratify every whim of children, imposing no burdens and exacting no toil. This, we acknowledge, would more certainly ruin them than labor, difficulties and trials. And yet we are slow to admit that our Heavenly Father, in permitting severe experiences to overtake us, is employing the surest agency for developing the manly virtues. And yet how else *shall he teach us the* necessity of economy, perseverance, pru-

dence, energy and self-reliance? How rarely are they developed by any other means? Every virtue, like every plant, must have appropriate soil in which to grow. Though on the bleak hillside and among mountain crags is a poor place to cultivate early garden vegetables, the sturdy oak grows there, its branches, by fierce winds and violent storms, being fitted to become keels and beams and ribs in the great ships that successfully outride the gale and carry our products to distant climes. A hundred feet beneath the surface of the surging ocean might be considered a poor place to raise monthly roses, but there the coral lives and lays foundations for islands. The bare rocks of Greenland and Siberia would be deemed a poor place on which to plant sweet elysium, but there grow hardy lichens that are capable of sustaining human life. Upon prosperity's sunny hilltops is a soil entirely unadapted to develop the qualities which constitute true greatness. Whatever of grace and of beauty may there be produced, it is certain that the sterner virtues, which are so necessary in life, are not likely to become conspicuous. These grow on adversity's bleak hillside, where chilling winds blow, and fierce storms rage, and dark clouds lower and forked lightnings glitter. My young friend, do not fear adversities; bravely met, they will develop true manliness of character. They are the diet upon which great men feed. They who continuously feed at prosperity's table become weaklings. "Learn to suffer and be strong."

Perhaps you exclaim, "That sounds beautifully, but when 'the arrows of outrageous fortune' are entering the quivering flesh it does not feel pleasant." No, but in this world suffering goes before happiness, toil before success, anguish before joy, struggle before victory, labor before rest, and the trials of earth before the bliss of heaven. It was not till Moses had spent forty years in the wilderness, braving dangers and enduring hardships, that he became leader of the Israelites. Not until the Jews had endured bitter servdom in

Egypt, did they eat manna from heaven, and enter a land flowing with milk and honey. Joseph, persecuted by his brethren, cast into a pit, sold to Ishmaelites, hurled into a prison, emerged to become the first ruler in the kingdom. Had he remained the favored son in Jacob's house, petted and indulged, remaining inactive in the sunshine of prosperity, he had been utterly disqualified for the responsible position he held in Egypt. The college from which Daniel graduated was a royal dungeon. But the lessons he learned in that severe training school fitted him for a position which Babylon's favored princes could not reach; no, not even by intrigue and envy and conspiracy. In great measure it was the hardships endured by Paul which gave him such marvellous strength of character, and rendered his preaching so potent. And if we take the pains to trace the influences which in all ages have been most instrumental in rendering God's servants eminent and useful, we shall not be surprised to hear David exclaim, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Nor is the testimony of profane history and of private observation less emphatic. Their unmistakable evidence is that only adversity can effectually break up the subsoil of human character, and sow in the deep furrows left by experience the manly virtues that successfully breast the severe storms of life. Frederick the Great attributed the successes of his later career to the lessons learned in the reverses of his early life. Washington's marvellous self-control, his remarkable soundness of judgment, his unfaltering faith in the success of the cause he had espoused, rest upon a character consolidated by the severe trials of his earlier days. We need not trouble you with a lengthy enumeration. With rare exceptions, the men eminent in business, in statesmanship, in war, in letters, at the bar, in the pulpit, and on the farm, are those who conquered success by virtue of the lessons learned in adversity's school. Who are our merchant princes of to-day? *They who were poor* boys once. Who are our best states-

men? Though it cannot be denied that unselfish, far-seeing statesmen, untrammelled by fetters of party, are quite rare, still, the few we have ascended the hill of fame with bleeding feet, acquiring hardihood and strength by rough experience. Compelled to carve for themselves a pedestal on which to stand between the contending waves of party factions, they have been, and still are, the best abused men in the country. Who own the best farms? As a rule, those who started in life poor, honest, economical, industrious, self-reliant, struggling manfully and long ere the victory came; defeated often, but successful at last.

"'Tis by defeat we conquer,
Grow rich by growing poor.
And from our greatest sufferings
We draw our largest store."

Does not the same principle hold true in Christian life? Is it not through the bitterness of our experience, through disappointments, sorrows, struggles, reverses, that the Christian acquires moral strength, courage to dare, patience to endure, faith to hope, charity to others, reliance upon God, and assurance of heaven?

"'Tis thus we rise by setting,
Tho' darkness reach our day;
Our own way hourly losing
To find the eternal way."

Let us not murmur, then, under the trials of the hour. They may develop a degree of strength which will be immeasurably more beneficial than the fleeting riches that may have slipped from our envious grasp. Let us learn to bear the yoke, bear it bravely, bear it patiently, and we shall one day wear the crown.

It is true, we may have less wealth, fewer luxuries, more trials, and severer embarrassments than in former years, but, as a consequence, we may be growing in all the manly virtues, in solid comfort, in genuine piety, in preparation for the world

where we shall be estimated by what we are, not by what we have. Here, alas! it too often happens that people are estimated by their possessions! In the scales of eternity, however, worth alone has weight. If, as cannot be denied, adversity is better fitted than prosperity to give us these, let us not murmur unreasonably under the pressure of Hard Times. These may be the agency by which divine benevolence is schooling us for shining mansions in the city whose foundations are unshaken by financial convulsions.

III. Hard Times teach us the necessity of exercising forethought for eternity. In the present we are able, as seldom before, to perceive the advantages of prudent looking ahead. They who saw the storm coming and prepared to meet it, have been best able to endure its fury. Those who kept constantly saying, "To-morrow will be as to-day, and much more abundant," have gone down under the winds and the waves. If, as all now perceive, a good degree of forethought is necessary to a successful voyage across the sea bounded toward the rising sun by infancy, towards the setting by old age, then assuredly we cannot fail to infer that forethought is imperatively demanded, if we are to guide our frail bark in safety over life's tempestuous ocean into eternity's safe harbor.

If, in our pecuniary transactions, we manifest prudence, in having regard to the contingencies of the future, is it possible we should be blind to the wisdom of endeavoring to determine our condition in eternity by the character of our conduct in time. Shall a man plan for to-morrow, and not for an endless existence; adopt a course of action which he hopes shall render him wealthy ten or twenty years hence, but be entirely indifferent to that which may enrich or impoverish him in eternity? Indeed, the very possibility of exercising forethought in reference to the future of life is presumptive evidence that we may do the same as regards the life beyond.

For want of premeditation, how many are financially

ruined! They ran with the multitude, accepted as infallible the teachings that dropped from unreflecting lips, or were hypocritically inculcated by those who desired to reap advantages from promulgating short-lived errors. Change the scene. Conceive, if you will, that time was but eternity is. Before the throne of immutable justice stand the crowded hosts of earth. Alas! what numbers, as the result of lacking forethought, are bankrupt forever! They lived for time, and are consequently unprepared for eternity. Forgetting that God's people regulate their lives by the unchanging principles of an unseen world, and preferring to accept the guidance of doctrines bred in the school of unstable policy, they went with the multitude to do evil, and silenced the occasional reproofs of conscience by the reflection that they were as well prepared as others—now comes the startling revelation, "Only those who sowed to the spirit shall reap life everlasting!" The disclosures of that great day! Who shall be found to have passed an earthly existence without due regard to the endless beyond?

The stringency of the present reveals the wisdom of those who practiced such economy as enabled them to lay up for future use. Those who prudently saved from their earnings and wisely invested their savings, have been able to pass through the Hard Times without feeling them so heavily as the spendthrift class. And if there is prudence in accumulating for future use, surely we cannot fail to perceive that there is wisdom in laying up treasures in heaven. Wise to prepare for the future of a brief lifetime, then it cannot be foolish to prepare for an endless existence.

Moreover, preparation in the latter case has this advantage, our riches are invested where no calamity can befall them. Banks may fail, real estate may depreciate, railroads may become bankrupt, manufacturing interest may become seriously depressed, business paper may become worthless, mining stocks valueless, but the riches of the redeemed are secure, eternally

enduring, "laid up in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt."

The reverses of the present have a tendency to wean our affections from material things, and centre them on spiritual. We need adversity to shake our hold on earth and earthly things, that the tendrils of our hearts may twine round the cross and enable us to climb heavenward. When the world and love of its vanities occupy our hearts, our Lord, and the religion he recommends are crowded out. But when reverses have in some measure destroyed the spirit of worldliness, then it is our hearts pant after God, after the living God.

Christian friends, endurance of trials is that from which we shall never be exempt while in the flesh. Tribulations are our inheritance. Let us learn, then, to bear them heroically, uncomplainingly. Properly received, patiently endured, and wisely reflected upon, they may become stepping-stones in our ascent to mansions of paradise. Alas! if not surmounted, they may become weights upon the soul that shall bear it down into despondency here, and into hopelessness hereafter.

My young friends, though indisposed to be a prophet of evil, and disinclined to cast even one shadow across the cheerfulness of your buoyant spirits, I nevertheless cannot conceal from myself the thought that in a world where reverses are more frequent than successes, and sorrows more numerous than joys, difficulties and disappointments must necessarily await you. As they come, may you have the grace to meet them bravely, and surmount them nobly. Ere your heads shall be whitening and your eyes failing, may you have learned that the difficulty is half conquered that is bravely met by trusting in God. And when, as may easily happen, the wail of Hard Times is sounding over the graves of those of us who have passed middle life, may it be your privilege, speaking from experience, to say to the young: "Adversity has its lessons; it is not an unmixed evil; let trouble bring you *nearer to God, and* heaven's rewards are yours."

THE SPIRIT IN WHICH TO BEAR THEM.

*"Charity * * * * beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."*—I. Cor., xiii., 7.

The secret of success, wherein does it consist? The art of amassing a fortune, who is qualified to give instructions in this?

Though few grow wealthy the process is simple. The rules to be observed are neither numerous nor difficult to understand—work hard, improve small opportunities, avoid debt, save a little from each year's earnings, be sufficiently resolute to live in a style corresponding with your income.

Wealth is more easily attained than any other object after which men ordinarily strive. Success as a scholar, an artist, a statesman, an orator, a poet, a professional man, is always difficult, because there are many arduous conditions. But to become rich one has merely to resolve on practicing such economy as will permit him to lay by a little each year, and then exercise due discretion in its investment. Two hundred dollars saved when one is twenty-five, and compounded at six per cent. interest, becomes $2,050 when the possessor has reached sixty-five. If, after earning and investing the $200 he does nothing more than make a living he has a snug provision for old age. And what young man is there who, for the four years between twenty-one and twenty-five is not able to lay by an average of fourteen cents a day? Most young men are spending more than that in folly. Why do they refuse to save it? The answer most would give is, "A sum so insignificant is not worth saving." But the results it will produce are not contemptible, independence in old age and exemption from the pinchings of the next period of Hard

Times. There is probably scarcely a young man in this community who could not, in the next five years, lay the foundations of an ample fortune. And since wealth is power, a means of living a more earnest Christian life, and of serving both God and man more effectively, I hesitate not to mention it on the Lord's day and from the sacred desk. It may do more towards raising up workers for Christ than some metaphysical disquisition respecting the hypostatic union, or learned comments about the rams' horns used at Jericho's overthrow.

It is no doubt too much to hope that all are willing to pay the price of subsequent independence. Hard Times, however, have taught us the advantages of economy. They have taught us that those who are willing to practice this old-fashioned Christian virtue till they secure a good start in life, and will afterwards avoid debt as they would the small-pox, may subsequently have all they should reasonably desire, no matter how stringent the money market may be. But he who refuses in early life to practice economy from principle, shall, in all likelihood, be compelled during nearly all his days to practice it from stern necessity. In this world there is a competency for nearly every one who will pay the price. And economy, which may be defined as living within one's means and saving a little each year, is a Christian virtue, a duty one owes to his family, to himself, to his friends, to the Church and to society.

As we have already seen, another lesson taught by Hard Times is self-reliance.

> "Those few, to whom is given what they ne'er earned,
> Know not, nor ever can, the generous pride
> That glows in him who on himself relies."

Inherited wealth is often a title deed to laziness. Too many helps given by parents are the means of producing spindle-legged dandies and feeble women, who need those *modern inventions,* elevators, to lift them to the upper stories

in society's great building. Those who have learned to depend upon themselves, their own physical, mental and moral strength, shall be able to fight their own battles, as their successful fathers did. The man who has been taught to rely upon himself can with difficulty be brought to thrust his hand into his neighbor's pocket, or turn rotten politician sooner than earn an honest living by work. He is a self-reliant man, with hardened muscles, a brave heart, a strong purpose and a willing hand.

Who are they that

> "Dive into the bottom of the deep
> And drag up drowned honor by the locks?"

Are they the sons of the wealthy who were dandled in the lap of ease? are they those who have always leaned upon crutches handed them by over-indulgent parents? No! they are those who have graduated from hardship's school, who have fed on trials, who have experienced less of sunshine than of storm, less of the sweet fondlings of fortune that makes weaklings than of the rough tossings of hard-fisted adversity that produces giants. Undoubtedly, it is one of the misfortunes of the present that young men commence life under too many advantages. Hard Times, however, by teaching us that adversity, especially to the young, is a blessing in disguise, may correct this, thereby greatly benefitting the class upon which the future of the nation and the Church depends.

As we have seen, another lesson emphasized by the present stringency is that what the world denominates success may be only brilliant failure; what it pronounces failure may be truest success. Some one has well said, "I confess that increasing years bring with them an increasing respect for men who do not succeed in life, as those words are commonly used." Possibly their failure in securing worldly success may have been owing to a conscience too sensitive, a judgment too clear, an independence of character too great, piety too genu-

ine, and modesty too retiring. If they declined to sacrifice honor, integrity and character for riches—refused to barter the imperishable for the perishable—they deserved success, and that in some cases is better than securing it. Nay, they have success more genuine than if they were residing in a palace while their names were dishonored; than if they were flattered by those who delight to bask in the sunshine of prosperity but were compelled to retire at night burdened by the reflection that their conduct had aided in bringing about that condition of society in which "truth is fallen in the streets and equity cannot enter." Even to one who is forced to concede that in a worldly point of view his life has been a partial failure, there is such a thing as success for eternity.

> "He who acts as conscience cries,
> Shall live, though dead."

These and kindred lessons occupied our thoughts on Sabbath last; to-day we invite your attention to the spirit in which Hard Times should be borne.

They should be borne in a spirit of cheerfulness. This Christian grace, love to God, which "beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," is characterized from its inception to its full maturity by subdued cheerfulness. It may be well to bear in mind that even among those who are thoroughly convinced that trials work out ultimate benefits, there are great diversities of dispositions and wide differences in the degree of resignation manifested. Some there are whose souls are so continuously filled with sunshine that even the densest clouds of the longest day of adversity are not permitted to cast shadows over their undisturbed spirits. As we contemplate their comparative exemption from anguish, one consideration may perhaps prevent us from the sin of coveting their disposition. If they are so constituted as not to pass through *the shaded* valley, they are most probably seldom upon the *hilltops of joy. The* possibility of entering the deepest depths

of anguish is almost uniformly associated with the capability of soaring to the highest summits of happiness. Those who suffer much at some periods are generally those who enjoy much at others. In earthly happiness, as in everything else, there is a kind of equilibrium.

Others there are who spend much of their time in an almost impenetrable gloom. They journey over the rough stones on life's highway, through the sharp thorns by the roadside; clouds are above them, difficulties around them, and a cheerless grave at the journey's end. They are strongly disposed to spend more time in murmuring under the ills of life than in praising God for its blessings; more breath in sighs than in prayers; more pains in rendering themselves miserable than in cheering humanity and in sweetening life's bitterness.

Of the two ways of viewing things, the gloomy and the cheerful, there are few indeed who are not able to perceive decided advantages in the latter. It fits one for bearing calamities, aids in smoothing the pathway to success, strengthens the heart for the endurance of trials, and clears the vision for perceiving the open passage out of encircling difficulties. It fortifies the conscience, gives back-bone to the will and cements friendships. Why do people feed the unsightly and unclean monster, melancholy, as if it were a bird of paradise? To appearances, some seem to consider gloominess as a near relative of piety. To smile is, in their judgment, almost a crime, nearly as much so as back-biting, tattling and tale-bearing. But some one responds, to be cheerful under all circumstances is an impossibility. So it indeed is. That, however, is no reason why one should not strive to cultivate the disposition. When bills are overdue, the table breadless, the coat threadbare, and the children shoeless, is a poor time to bid adieu to cheerfulness. Then one needs all the courage which this Christian grace can impart. And indeed, what right has one to be melancholy? Is the grass black because there are clouds overhead? Are the leaves of the trees a lurid red because

storms are raging? Are the meadows blue as indigo because the adjacent rivulet is running over hard pebbles?

Hard Times should be borne in the spirit of faith. With unshaken trust in God, it is marvellous how unperturbed one may be amid the surges of fortune's sea. To him whose soul is anchored on the eternal Rock, riches may come or go, fortune may smile or frown, friends may crowd around in the season of adversity or may desert, kindness may load us with its caresses or may be supplanted by that harshness whose tones chill the soul, the spirit of appreciation may laud our noble endeavors, or the tongue of malice may shoot bitter words and create wide-spread misapprehension in reference to the character we possess and the spirit that rules our lives—still, come what may, he who retains an immovable faith in a Heavenly Father's guidance enjoys a degree of peace which wealth is powerless to impart. The principle of love to God, if regnant, creates a measure of faith which induces the conviction that "all things work together for good." "All things"—sorrows no less than joys, reverses as well as successes, trials even more conspicuously than silk-slippered fortune. It prompts us to accept everything that happens as from the hand of our Father above. Singly, many of our trials are evidently working temporary misfortune, are producing keen anguish; but unitedly they may be working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

In the darkness of these trying times let us have faith to believe that "God of His goodness has prepared for the poor." From the full horn of plenty he has always bestowed enough for all the children of men. We may look upon it as a remarkable display of Divine benevolence, that though, owing to man's indolence or improvidence some sections have experienced the pinchings of hunger—certain classes even enduring the agonies of lingering starvation—there has never been a *time* in the world's history, so far as is known, when the *products of agriculture,* taking the earth as a whole, have not

been amply sufficient for all. He has prepared at his bountiful table for all—not merely for the rich and the great, but for the poor and the humble as well. Let us have the faith to believe that the Hand that gave us being will also supply our bread.

Unless we mistake, he is comparatively blind, who does not perceive a bright future before this country, a good time coming, and that we are now preparing ourselves for entrance upon it. Are we not cultivating the character which ensures success? Young men of honesty, energy, truthfulness, perseverance and prudence are growing up around us. Have we not, then, the right to anticipate a return of good times? Let us have the faith that will lift the soul above the discouragements of the present and paint the future in brighter colors. If faith, which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," has proved a potent instrumentality in conquering difficulties and distilling blessings; if it has "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness acquired strength, and waxed valiant in fight," then assuredly it will aid very materially in smoothing the asperities of life and in making the future such as we ardently hope it may be. However trying our experiences may be, let us retain faith in God's goodness.

> "That cheerful watcher through the night
> Soothing the grief from which she may not flee;
> A herald of gladness; a seraph bright,
> Pointing to sheltering heavens yet to be."

Though you may have lost all else, riches, comforts, friends, health and spirits:

> "Guard thy faith with holy care,
> Mystic virtues slumber there."

Hard Times should be borne in the spirit of hope. Since true love to God prompts us to hope all things, certainly it may strengthen us to endure the trials of the present in the assured conviction that the night must be succeeded by the dawn. The more intense the darkness, the more brilliant by contrast will be the brightness of the coming morn. In the past history of nations, and in the past of our own history, periods of unusual depression have been succeeded by seasons of unwonted elevation. Though on the ocean beach it may be low tide to-day, it is certain there will be a high tide ere long. The ship may be grating on the bottom and springing aleak at nearly every seam; a few hours later, on the bosom of a full ocean, it may be spreading sails for another voyage. Let us have patience, hope on, wait in preparation, and by the time we are well ready to receive the favor our Heavenly Father will send us a tidal wave of prosperity.

Why all this worry that wears away life far more than incessant toil? Why this gloom that brings religion into reproach as though it could not comfort under life's ills? You respond: "Because things are not as we would like to have them." No! and never will be. No head lies easy till it is pillowed in the tomb. Meanwhile why worry over what we cannot help? Better surrender at once to the inevitable and be cheerful. Why worry over what we can help? Summon energy, and put things as you would like to have them. Do the best you can in the present.

> "Who does the best his circumstance allows,
> Does well, acts nobly; angels could do no more."

Hope for the future and good cheer will take the place of corroding melancholy. A poor boy while sweeping the snow from a lady's door-steps, was asked: "Don't you fear God will let you starve?" Looking up into her face he asked: "*Do you think God* will let me starve when I do my best,

and then trust Him?" Have we less disposition to do our best than this homeless, friendless lad? or less faith in our Heavenly Father? It cannot be. Then assuredly

> "Hope will dawn on effort
> Like another morning risen on mid-noon."

The spirit of hope so warmly commended as an efficient instrumentality in bearing the burdens of Hard Times is not an agency which we can afford to despise. Indeed, what would life be without it? scarcely less than a night of sorrow whose agonies were interrupted by a dream of despair. It is the beauteous virgin that stands in the pathway of youth, beckoning onward, nerving to renewed exertions, and filling the future with pictures of brilliant success. She stands beside man in middle life as he grapples with trials, pointing upwards. As the mother leans, bathed in tears, over the cradle where her darling is struggling with death, the angel of hope hovers above, whispering of heaven, and of a happy reunion there. With the aged Christian, as he totters on his staff, she is present, reminding him that there is a world where an enfeebled intellect, a failing memory, whitened locks and trembling limbs shall renew their youth. In the chamber where the good man meets his fate she erects her throne, bidding him remember that life and immortality have been brought to light in the Gospel. Amid the mourners at the open grave, cheerful and undisturbed, she exclaims: "Jesus is the resurrection and the life."

Possessing these three, cheerfulness, faith, hope, we may "endure all things," exalting our view above the present with its changing vanities, and fixing it on the unchanging realities of the eternal future.

HOW TO MAKE THEM GOOD.

"*Come let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind up.*"—Hosea vi., 1.

How shall this nation; which is torn and smitten; which is wounded and sick; which has been drinking wine of humiliation and eating ashes of grief; which has been passing through an unusually severe and long-protracted period of Hard Times—how shall it secure a return of prosperous times? By retracing the steps taken in departing from the Lord. How may this be done?

I. By obliterating the effects of the war. This, which is one of the most severe scourges by which human society is chastised, left us burdened with three armies—an army of cripples, an army of mourners and an army of rascals. With the mourners we are willing to sympathize. The cripples we are able to support. Are we willing to hurl the knaves from the high social and political positions which they occupy, and consign them to oblivion? Unless we are, our return to better times will be slow and arduous; our hope for a cessation of divine judgment, however ardent it may be, must necessarily be long deferred.

Natural kindness of disposition may prompt many of us to feel a keen regret for the misfortunes of some whose names have suffered dishonor, who have passed from the communion table to contempt, perhaps from envied positions in society to confinement within prison walls; but if we are deeply anxious for a return of prosperous times, and withal have due regard to the honor of the Christian name, we will not mourn long because they, like Judas, have gone to their own *place. Society,* far from being advantaged, is seriously *injured by the* presence of successful knaves, especially if *they occupy* prominent positions and enjoy the esteem of the

community; and manifestly the Church cannot afford to permit rascality to conceal itself beneath the sacred robes of religion. Even the most irreligious, however indisposed they may be to aid in supporting religious services, can afford to give liberally better than they can afford to permit knavery to purchase the sanction of Christian people. Their sacrifices will be lighter than if, in consequence of neglecting their obligations to the Church, dishonest persons shall come to control it, thereby permitting knavery to attain temporary respectability. We look upon it as one of the calamities of the times, that the Church in this nation, instead of being supported by the small contributions of the many, is brought under pecuniary obligations to the wealthy few, in some instances to those who have proved defaulters. If all would come up manfully to the work, dishonesty might be relieved from the opportunity of purchasing forgiveness by large pew rents. It is an almost measureless calamity, when, as has frequently happened in the last few years, persons are found prominent in Christian churches, who are embezzlers of bank funds, conspicuous in ring frauds, or adepts in manipulating grand juries so as to shield themselves from the penalties their conduct merited.

It will be a bright day for this nation when the dishonesty consequent upon the war, is forced to hide its head in shame; a day of glad rejoicing when the honest poor contribute their mites to the Lord's treasury and invite rascality, however liberal it may be, to take a back seat. May the time soon come when a person's position in the Church at least is determined solely by the character possessed; when riches will neither engender envy, nor purchase a religious cloak with which to cover wrong; when a poor man will neither be excused from obeying divine commands because he is not rich, nor hindered by simple poverty from holding the most responsible position; when he whose character is most Christ-like will command the highest esteem.

In the same grave with our dead idol, paper currency less

than par, let us bury her children—speculation, extravagance and commercial dishonesty. Let us dig a long, deep, broad sepulchre in some mountain glen and bury them beyond the reach of resurrection. Let naught but the howling winds mourn their decease; nothing but the ghosts of shattered fortunes visit their detested tomb; nothing but shrunken knavery skulk thither in midnight darkness to shed tears over the execrated spot.

As preparatory to an era of good times, political corruption, another effect of the war, must be strangled. O that the time may soon dawn when we shall be able to bid an everlasting adieu to those cringing creatures, fit only to move in the slime of human society, who patronizingly pat men on the back, slip a coin into their hands, treat them to bad whiskey, or promise some political office, and lost to all feelings of self-respect, whine out, "Vote for me;" when office seeks men and not men office; when integrity of character and capability constitute fitness for holding responsible positions; when as a people we shall detest those who, by the employment of money succeed in thwarting the will of the people, dishonor God, stupefy the public conscience and endanger the continuance of free institutions.

Some one, perhaps, responds, "If these changes are to take place ere good times return we shall not live to witness their advent." The dawn of better days is not dependent, however, upon the completion of these changes, but upon their inauguration. Once fairly introduced, they will gradually reach consummation. Even were it otherwise we need not necessarily grow disheartened. An eternal embodiment of justice still reigns, and when once the people become aroused —and they are rapidly awakening—there will be some heavy cannonading, some glittering flashes of destroying lightning; when the clouds clear away political corruption will lie a *mangled corpse.* The public though patient is not all-suffering. *Our Heavenly* Father, though he beareth long with

national iniquities, punishes them severely, and often suddenly when the time of vengeance comes. An injured people, when thoroughly aroused, make short work. Sudden convulsions are by no means rare.

It seems to be an undeniable fact that there are alternating waves of morality and immorality; times when even good men fall into the habit of practicing and endorsing penicious principles; times when bad men, in self-defence, become strenuous defenders of a lofty standard of public morality.

How shall we make times good?

II. By restoring confidence between man and man. This, unfortunately, has been sadly shaken, and little wonder, for not a few who have stood high in public esteem, have even been prominent as examples in morals and in piety, have been weighed and found wanting. Consequently people anxiously ask, whom can we trust? Certainly there are large numbers of strictly honest people. Comparatively few of us have been deliberately swindled. Nay, very many of those who are unable to pay their debts are entirely honest, so far at least as their intentions go. While we can with difficulty be too severe upon the really guilty, wholesale denunciation, by tending to destroy confidence, is exceedingly injurious. Its natural result is to destroy credit, to make us distrust every one, and every one distrust us.

How restore confidence? By the cultivation of personal character entirely deserving confidence. Let this disposition become general and we shall hear fewer complaints than now. If the farmer will make his ground fertile he will have little occasion to murmur over the smallness of the crops. If the business man will conduct his business with energy and prudence, in most instances he will be relieved from spending idle breath in complaining. He who assiduously cultivates the character which commands respect, will be respected. He who sincerely endeavors to cultivate the graces of the *Christian will* seldom be called upon to mourn that the world

does not appreciate them. Accordingly, if, as a people, we are studiously cultivating and practicing principles of integrity, we need have no fear in reference to confidence between man and man. Give us the cause and the effect will follow.

III. Another powerful instrumentality in securing a return of good times is the prevalence of a determination on the part of every one to live upon the fruits of his own industry. We are told that at present out of every five two are idlers, living upon the earnings of others. This we look upon as an over-estimate of the idle class. Still the undeniable fact remains that many, judging from their conduct, seem to imagine that others' industry should support them in idleness. "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat." The justice of this is apparent to those who after planning carefully and toiling assiduously have given of their savings to the poor only to find that they have increased evils which they hoped to remove; that instead of encouraging them to do for themselves, the painful indisposition to work has become a chronic disease. To give to the needy is indeed a pleasant privilege. To induce them to become self-reliant and self supporting under all circumstances is to confer a greater blessing upon them, and as well upon society.

IV. Another agency in making times good. Fill the sanctuaries of the land with earnest worshippers. Possibly, some fail in seeing the connection between financial prosperity and full Churches. Perhaps they are disposed to ask, "Does not the maintenance of the Church entail pecuniary burdens?" Certainly it does, and what is more, we may have too many churches and far too great extravagance in their construction. And yet we should not close our eyes to the fact that the annual liquor bill of this nation is very much larger than the amount expended in building churches and school-houses and in supporting ministers and teachers.

As an investment, there is nothing this country can do *which will yield a* more profitable return—not alone in char-

acter and intelligence, but in material prosperity—than maintain Churches where an unadulterated gospel is preached, and schools where a good education is imparted. Observe, we are not commending magnificant piles of brick and stone, but comfortable buildings where all may meet to worship God; are not endorsing all that passes under the name of Gospel, but the unperverted truth as it comes from Scripture; are not affirming that our present system of public instruction is faultless, but simply that it is good, necessary and exceedingly advantageous. The Church and the school are institutions which modern civilization can never dispense with. Alas! in this country there is still a vast field for their operation. Great as has been our progress, especially in the last twenty-five years, there yet remaineth much land to be possessed. These are the two agencies which, under the blessing of Heaven, have made us to differ from the barbarous races; these are the instrumentalities which have elevated us above the condition of our savage ancestors in Europe. The nearly measureless difference between savages of the present day and ourselves is due, not to native intelligence, for in this they are our equals; not to physical strength, in this they are our superiors; not to the power of endurance, in this they surpass us. The difference is attributable to the Gospel and to the priceless benefits it has conferred upon us. We are what we are because we are in the enjoyment of its blessed privileges.

Accordingly, it is not improper for me to remind you of the claims of the Church upon the country. As an educator it has never had an equal. Besides what it has done in establishing systems of free instruction, in organizing private schools and founding and endowing colleges, as an educator of the public in her own immediate province she has wielded an immense influence. Indeed, the person who will attend her services, take an interest in her Sunday School instructions, and *occupy a place* in her prayer meetings will acquire an

almost invaluable education. He will be greatly benefitted even for this life, and, best of all, may lay a good foundation for the hope of a better.

Those, therefore, who neglect the sanctuary do themselves an irreparable injury. As a class, they voluntarily doom themselves to moderate success here and to a rayless eternity beyond. Nay, their neglect is not merely a calamity to them, but a serious detriment to the progress of society. It is a painful fact that some classes have to be benefitted in spite of themselves; have to be lifted as a dead weight to a higher level; while some are supporting the Church, and gladly, hopefully doing so, others are declining to reap the benefits gratuitously proffered them.

But you ask, "How will the filling of the sanctuaries convert hard times into good times?" Very readily. If we return unto God, He will return unto us. If we should become a nation of earnest, sincere, consistent Christians, confidence would be restored, industry would take the place of idleness, economy would supplant reckless extravagance, prosperity would displace thriftlessness. What we need is a sincere and hearty return to God, and the consequent practice of the common duties of life. Of merely theoretical religion we have an abundance; of practical there is a deficiency.

V. We need to cultivate personal piety. By piety, however, is not meant mere religious emotion. That is as powerless in bettering the condition of society as the superstitions of the heathen. Holy methods of serving Satan, of which there are many, are nevertheless the service of the evil one. If one is to be cheated, he would a little rather be cheated by one who has the manliness to make no pretence to piety, than by one who adopts religious ways of doing the same thing. Of all frauds, pious frauds are the worst. Religion boastingly displayed in words, while the conduct does not correspond *therewith,* is powerless; but when modestly exhibited in business transactions it is potent for good. What the age needs

is piety which vaunts itself less, and pays a hundred cents to the dollar; which shouts glory hallelujah less loudly, but deals honestly, loves mercy and walks humbly with God; which having too high respect for religion to introduce it irreverently amid business negotiations, has sufficient fidelity to religious principle to make it manifest in actions. Words are cheap. They only cost a little breath. Actions, which cost something, are the true test of piety. "Not every one who saith, Lord, Lord, but he who doeth the will of God."

We all acknowledge that what is needed is religious principle. How shall we secure it? By cultivation. How convince the world that it exists? By unostentatious fidelity to it. Christ said to His professing people, "Ye are a city set upon a hill." A city does not need a herald who shall stand in some conspicuous place and shout: "This is a city; we are better than other cities; we are God's chosen people; ours is a lofty moral standard; Heaven's principles rule our lives." Dismiss the herald, save wasted breath. If the place can't prove itself a city by actions, it certainly can't by words. Those who transact business in her marts will form their opinions entirely independent of what the herald may be shouting.

Again the Master says, "Ye are the light of the world." Do we need some one who shall stand upon the summit of a lofty mountain and through a brazen trumpet shout: "The sun is shining." Its shining will be manifest in the effects produced, in springing grass, blooming trees and ripening grain. "Ye are the salt of the earth." Salt needs no loud-mouthed herald to proclaim its presence. This is proved by the effects it noislessly produces.

The keen-eyed world, it is true, is quite proficient in discovering blemishes in Christian character. It seems disposed to forget that there is no such thing as human perfection; that there are few obligations resting upon Christians which do not rest with equal force upon others. To those inclined

towards a religion which consists in picking flaws in others the Bible exclaims, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." It is well to remember that other men's failings can never save us. If Christians are not what they should be they nevertheless have sufficient grace, it is hoped, to rejoice in the manifestation of living godliness wherever it may be, within the fold or without it.

One fact will scarcely be denied, the best people in every community are deeply interested in the Church and are struggling earnestly to benefit society. Can any good reason be assigned why those who are so much interested in genuine religion as to spend time and energy in dragging to the light all the inconsistencies which mar the beauteous temple of God, should not employ their talents in the more laudable endeavor to exemplify true piety? Far more good can be accomplished in presenting the world a faultless model than by pointing out defects in the models it has. If eminently consistent lives are exhibited, none will rejoice more than Christians. If the best of God's people embark in the contemptible business of hounding down those who are sincerely endeavoring to obey divine commands, they will be found doing what even their most malignant enemies have never charged them with doing. They are charitable. Let those who have abused religion simply present us models of devotion to God and the good of humanity, and the warmest commendations they receive will be from the class they have misrepresented.

To me it is a pleasing thought that there are some without the communion of the Church who are sincerely striving to serve God. It were better if the fruit-bearing vines were all within the sacred enclosure, sheltered from fierce winds, favored with the warmer rays of Heaven, under the immediate care of the Great Husbandman, surrounded by influences which aid in enhancing beauty, in increasing fruitfulness and in developing hidden strength. Since it may not be so, *perhaps because thorns* are occupying the place which they

might otherwise occupy, let us not be guilty of soliciting charity from them while unwilling to accord them the same. Let us have the disposition which shall enable us to accept the Saviour's declaration, "Many shall came from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham in the Kingdom." Let us have that fidelity to unadulterated truth which shall prompt us to believe that they, and they alone, are God's children who are sincerely endeavoring to serve Him and their fellow men. With that intensity of earnestness which induces us to labor continuously for progress in personal consecration, and prays that all may possess divine forgiveness, let us mark our pathway to glory by charity for all.

WHEN WILL THEY COME NO MORE?

"*Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers.*"—Deut. vii., 12.

Says Solomon, "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this." However deeply we may be disheartened by a thoughtful outlook upon the present, there can be no doubt that in the main there has been progress. The nations are wealthier, more intelligent, in certain respects more moral, and in some aspects more religious. The progress, it is true, has been interrupted at times by retrograde movements. Perhaps we should not err greatly, were we to concede that we are now on a retreating wave. Wealth is disappearing, moral principle is becoming less powerful, Christian profession is dishonored, religion is openly insulted. Still, it does not follow that in all respects the former times were better than these, nor that the immediate future will not witness great moral improvement. The ship which has been drifting towards the rocks may suddenly take a new tack, and quietly enter a safe harbor. For this let us labor. There are not a few earnest souls who assure us that the present is a remarkably immoral age; that we are treading upon the crumbling edge of a mighty precipice; that worldliness is rife, conscience dead, vice rampant, and religion either a pleasing sentiment or a lifeless formalism. With a startling array of facts they affirm that we are living in a degenerate age. Nor are they sufficiently refuted by the flippant class of speakers who boastingly affirm: The age is less immoral than those *that have gone before*, the appearances of increased wicked-

ness being produced by the publicity now given to all forms of iniquity. But, though newspapers are making us more familiar with the moral condition of the public by reporting crimes, sometimes with disgusting details, quite often in forms that tend to lessen man's horror of it, it may be questioned whether certain forms of crime were as prevalent during the past history of this country as now. Certainly their frequency and their enormity are becoming alarming.

To dwell upon this fact, however, may tend to produce discouragement. Thither deep despondency lies. Let us note rather the encouragements to renewed exertion. There is a vast amount of Christian activity. Let us hope this will ere long produce beneficial results. The spirit of reform is becoming quite general. Let us pray that it may sweep over the land like a devouring fire, destroying everything that is hostile to the best interests of humanity, inimical to the progress of genuine religion, and dishonoring to God. The spirit of self-sacrifice is rapidly growing. Let us hope it will accomplish miracles of reform. A readiness to suffer for truth is becoming quite conspicuous, more so than in years gone by. Surely, blessings innumerable will distil from her jewelled fingers. If the spirit of the martyrs shall swell within Christian bosoms, perishing souls will be rescued, the Church quickened, and a nation born almost as in a day. Heavenly Father, give us more of the martyr spirit, that the success of Thy cause may be the most powerful motive influencing our hearts. When we stand face to face with death may it be our privilege to say, "This little life has been consecrated to God and humanity. Father, we surrendered it to Thee on earth; take it to thyself in glory. Saviour, we were willing to die for Thee; may we live eternally with Thee."

When will Hard Times come no more?

I. When party spirit is destroyed—perhaps we should say when it is in some measure circumscribed. Some, possibly, may *question the* propriety of discussing the moral aspects of

politics. Such, however, would do well to remember that the prophets were religious statesmen; their writings severe denunciations of improper lines of national policy, and earnest recommendations of those approved in revelation. It is scarcely worth our while to become more holy than our accepted standard of faith and practice. Aside from the abundant sanction of Scripture, a moment's reflection convinces us that religion is under the most sacred obligations to condemn whatever is evil in politics and commend whatever is right.

From no portion of the broad province of morality and religion may she be legitimately invited to retire. Indeed, it is because she has not properly cultivated all her fields that so many political crimes have been enacted and corruption has become so exceedingly rampant. The prophets and John Knox, far from condemning the Church for discussing the moral phases of politics, saw plainly that unless the national fountains of influence were kept pure, personal piety, in many cases, would be only a respectable cloak to cover moral rottenness. Most persons will concede that party spirit must be in some measure circumscribed ere we see an advent of good times. It has been the bane of Republics. In ancient Rome it attained such power that no agency was considered too base, provided it aided in the furtherance of political ends. Under its blighting influence the sturdy Roman character lost nearly all its manly virtues. Notwithstanding stringent legislation, the purchase of votes became so common and appalling in its effects upon individual and national character that, as the less of two evils, the offices were sold at auction to the highest bidder. Rome's liberties were gone. Her greatness was a thing of the past. She soon sank beneath a surging tide of corruption. Centuries have not sufficed for her delivery. Hordes of beggars now infest her streets, where *once was heard the* proud tread of soldiers whose valiant arms *had conquered the* civilized world; senate chambers are now

silent, where once great statesmen weighed the destinies of empires.

It is a painful but undeniable fact that the spirit of party, when pressed too far, tends to blind one to the vital interests of the country. We become partisans rather than patriots. But how is this spirit to be broken? It sometimes seems doubtful whether it ever will be sufficiently eradicated to relieve us from imminent danger, or to inaugurate needed reforms; and yet, if on an average, in every county of this nation, there were five hundred independent voters, they would practically hold in their hands the destinies of this nation, and would force both parties to give us good legislation, a vigorous enforcement of the laws, and nominations for office worthy the confidence of a great nation. Both parties would be under the necessity of bidding for the favor of those who held the balance of power. May the day soon dawn when good people cling as closely and as firmly as the vicious classes.

II. Nor need we anticipate a return of prosperous times till greater economy is practiced in public expenditures. It costs more to govern this nation poorly than would suffice to govern it well, more than for the maintenance of monarchy in England. Indeed, what is wrenched from us in taxes by the liquor traffic alone would, in a few years, render times prosperous.

Certainly we need not expect good times till parties cease vieing with each other in prostituting public interests to the purchase of votes. Seventeen millions, in addition to previous pensions, were voted by the recent Congress to soldiers. Did they expect it? No. Did they clamor for it? No. Why then was this new burden imposed upon us? One party recommended it to manufacture political capital. The other, fearing the loss of votes, endorsed it.

Perhaps, instead of fruitlessly inveighing against these things we should be doing more for the welfare of society by

industriously cultivating a manly independence which shall prompt us to say, "Let others do as they may, as for me I will serve the Lord," and take the consequences; serve Him not alone in the sanctuary, but in the home, on the street, in the place of business, in whatever moral reforms may be inaugurated and in the duties of citizenship; serve him standing in my lot and unmurmuringly accepting whatever comes. What every age needs, and this, perhaps, in pre-eminent degree, is *moral heroism*. There is a lack of individuality. Men are like sardines in a box, one scarcely distinguishable from another; are like sheep which go in a drove, and cannot be made to go singly unless one happens to be angry. In modern society, there is, to appearances, a conspiracy against independent action. So extremely feeble is the spirit of individuality that some who would have courage to remain with a regiment in battle could not be prevailed upon to disregard the dictates of fashion. With them custom dictates everything, their amusements, their modes of living, the amount they shall give to the Church, the manner they shall educate their children, the style in which they shall dress, the opinions they shall entertain, and the actions they shall perform. They are slaves to custom. The eternal laws of God are less binding upon them than the conventional codes of society. They will disregard divine commands and violate their own convictions rather than stand alone. Consequently, the first question asked is not, "Is it right?" but "Is it politic?" Craven, what difference does it make whether it is politic or not? whether the multitude commend it or censure it? Stand by your conscience and your God. Do your own thinking. You don't cramp your feet because millions of Chinese do. You don't compress your head because some Indian tribes admire a cone-shaped skull. Why then should you run counter to your own judgment simply in obedience to policy? *Do what reason* dictates and moral sense approves and let *those who are lacking* in manly independence ape others.

Possibly they may weary of imitating senseless customs and selfish modes of action and may fall to aping Christian heroism. Mr. John Mill has well said, that in this age the man who thinks for himself and acts independently, does a service to the race; a service the lack of which marks the chief danger of the times.

Great moral changes were never yet inaugurated by the simultaneous movement of masses of men. They are fruits of individual heroism. Witness Paul; God and he on one side, almost the entire world on the other. Behold him before the Roman court! Does he wait before publicly endorsing Christianity till half the empire had embraced it? Nay, he pleads for his Master, though facing death, till the guilty judge "paled to the color of his marble throne." From that court the message of redemption went to many a heart. Did Elijah wait till all Israel was ready to accompany him into the presence of wicked Ahab? Had he done so Israel had been helplessly at the feet of the cruel monarch. He pressed into the presence of the king, burdened with the conviction, "I, I only, am left and they seek my life to take it." He dared to say, "Thou, O Ahab, art he that doth trouble Israel." Lo, what a revelation; there were seven thousand in Israel, all unknown to Elijah, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Under the magic of Elijah's example their cowardice disappeared and Israel was rescued.

Fix your eye upon Martin Luther, at a time when all Europe was in fetters of spiritual despotism, under the iron heel of the Romish Church. Did he enter some secluded nook and carefully estimate the exact strength of the enemy, and weigh in the scales of human prudence the probability of his being able to do battle successfully against so many and such desperate foes? By no means. In the face of Rome and in the hearing of Europe he shouted: "Here I stand, I cannot otherwise, God help me." That single act of *moral heroism* emboldened thousands and made multitudes

Protestant. By consequence, we to-day worship God according to the dictates of our own consciences. Another illustration. When Moses came down from the mount and found that the Israelites had made a golden calf and were worshipping it, did he consult policy and cowardly ask, in half-suppressed whisper, "How many are yet faithful to God?" No, standing in the gate of the camp, he shouted in the hearing of Israel, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me;" and from out that great host came forth the sons of Levi. They had wavered before; had gone with the multitude. Perhaps they studied policy and had forgotten that eternal truth, if adhered to, is certain to win victory. Again Moses shouts, "Put every man his sword by his side * * * and slay every man his neighbor." There fell of the people that day three thousand, *and idolatry in Israel found a grave.*

It is no doubt apparent to all that, as Christians, we do more to reform existing evils by cultivating Christian graces than by hurling anathemas against abounding iniquity; apparent that the good time coming is to be inaugurated by individual heroism, not by waiting till all are actuated to return to God, and the obedience of His commands; by each one standing in his lot till the end be. When every Christian has acquired that degree of manliness which enables him to stand quietly but firmly by his convictions, better times will speedily dawn. Though it is indeed impossible to drive men into battle it is not difficult to lead them. As a rule, the world is not willing to permit its benefactors to suffer martyrdom in its behalf. It will spring to their side.

III. With pleasure we pass to a more congenial theme. When will Hard Times come no more? When moral reforms pass from the province of talk to the province of action. They must of necessity begin in a change of opinion, which can *only* be secured by a succession of solid arguments reiterated *again and again till* all perceive their cogency. Nothing

practical, however, is effected till opinions are boiled down into action. So far as producing beneficial results is concerned it is quite immaterial what we think unless our beliefs receive embodiment in acts. We may talk temperance, recommend reform, inveigh against lawlessness, denounce public extravagance, and hurl anathemas against political corruption; with the thunderbolts of sarcasm we may scathe the crime of vote-purchasing, we may preach political honesty with the power and eloquence of Demosthenes, but unless we convert our opinions into a purpose and our purpose into an act, no change is effected. You cannot stop the flow of a river by standing upon the bank and arguing with the fast-moving current. You cannot conquer the enemy by stationing yourself in some safe retreat and manufacturing paper bullets. The world's greatest orator, when asked wherein consisted the power of oratory, responded, "First, in action; second, in action; third, in action." Certainly the secret of securing reform in those things which are conditions of returning prosperity, is *Act, act, act.* It is true, thought rules the world, but it only rules when expressed in the language of action. When those who desire a reformation in Church and State feel too deeply to say much, but are resolutely determined on action, we shall be upon the eve of good times.

I sometimes fancy his Satanic Majesty sends messengers to earth to ascertain how his cause is progressing. One returns to the regions of darkness announcing, "Christian people are in wonderful commotion. They are arguing with great power the superior advantages of genuine religion." Satan calmly replies, "Let them go on. There is no occasion for anxiety." A few months later another messenger from earth announces in the high assemblies of pandemonium, "We must take decisive measures instantly or our dominion on earth will be at an end. The Church is denouncing sin in valiant style. The excitement is intense. Every one is talking and arguing. *So potent are the* reasonings that our friends are silenced, not

one voice being publicly raised in defence of our rights, opinions, privileges and practices." Above the din of the excited host Satan's voice is heard inquiring, "Are they doing anything more than talk?" "No." "Then there is no ground for fear. Dismiss this assembly. I have known them to talk for years, and resolve again and again, and subsequently endorse my rule. Nay, in great measure their actions are all I could desire. My kingdom does not rest upon talk but upon acts." In the lapse of time another messenger arrives. Flying straight to the council chamber of the vast realm of darkness, he shouts, "Fellow fiends, on earth a few people who have hitherto said but little against our dominion have resolutely entered the domain of action. Reform has entered upon a new stage. They have changed their conduct. Everything they do deals a deadly blow at us. And the heroism is becoming contagious. Others quietly but with fixed determination, are falling into line." Immediately all pandemonium was in uproar. Swift-winged messengers were hastily dispatched to earth and advised to say to those in the province of action, "You are acting unwisely. Study policy. You are making enemies to the cause you profess to love. Retreat into the province of moral suasion. Unite yourselves with those wiser people who argue the case and await God's time for deliverance from existing evils."

"Foul fiends, back to the dark dungeon whence you issued. We don't spend our time in idle talk. We have determined to act and win victory or purchase honorable death." That night there was sadness in pandemonium. His Satanic Majesty mournfully exclaimed, "We have suffered defeat. Moral reform will sweep over the earth like a destroying tornado."

IV. When will Hard Times come no more? When religion becomes an every-day dress and by consequence we *have an* exhibition of practical Christian virtues. There is a *powerful tendency* to have a form of religion which may be

put on with the Sabbath dress, and laid off with it. We serve God on Sabbath with words. Are we as careful to serve him six days in the week by acts? If so, how does it happen that in a nation where there are millions of professing Christians, needed reforms are so exceedingly slow in reaching success? It is in the power of professing Christians to suppress, in great measure, the evils of the liquor traffic; to terminate Sabbath desecration; to crush out, to some extent, the political corruption which is eating up our substance and sapping the foundations of national permanency; to frown down extravagance, and inaugurate reform wherever needed. Were we to unite around the cross and implore the descent of the Spirit, a revival such as we have never witnessed would sweep over the land, showering blessings on every hand. When religion becomes a ruling principle, a practical power in every believer's heart, Hard Times will be succeeded by prosperity. Of this we may be certain since we have the assurance, "Godliness has promise of the life that now is." Moreover, as we are all perfectly well aware that in the case of individuals immoral living tends to poverty, we have no difficulty in believing that public immorality induces Hard Times; consequently, the cultivation of practical piety is the most direct agency in securing a return of prosperity.

When religion has become an every-day dress we shall have less sympathy with crime and a higher regard for justice. Sympathy with criminals is a luxury this nation can no longer afford. It is injurious to those upon whom it is conferred, increases evils that are already appalling, tends to national impoverishment, removes rewards from virtue, and is a glaring injustice to the friends of law and order. Prompt and adequate punishment for law-breakers will rapidly pave the way to better times. When justice sits enthroned, holding her scales with each hand, incapable of being purchased by either bribes or flattery, we shall be upon the high road to sunnier days. *Permanent* blessings shall then distil upon us from the

